

that we need to raise the debt ceiling, and in a few moments, I will offer a way forward for us to avoid causing unnecessary and catastrophic default on the debt.

Over the last 2 days, the Republican leader has repeatedly cited an instance in the mid-2000s during which Republicans held full control of the government and voted by themselves to increase the debt limit. Here is what he said: That is “exactly the same situation we’re in now.” That is “exactly the same situation we’re in now.”

The Senate was able to raise the debt ceiling at that time because the then-Republican majority leader made a consent request to this body that cleared the way for the Senate to increase the debt limit by a majority threshold instead of requiring 60 votes to break a filibuster. The minority party, under this agreement, was able to vote no, which is what they claim they want to do, and the majority party was able to approve a debt limit extension and prevent a catastrophe.

So we are proposing the same thing today, the same thing the leader cited and said the situation is exactly the same. Simply allow for a simple majority threshold to raise the debt ceiling and avoid this needless catastrophe that Republicans have steered us toward. We are simply asking Senator McCONNELL to live by his own example.

We have given the Republicans what they want, and now the ball is in their court. Let’s see if Republicans truly want what they say they want. We are not asking them to vote yes. If Republicans want to vote to not pay the debts they helped incur, they can all vote no. We are just asking Republicans to get out of the way. Get out of the way when you are risking the full faith and credit of the United States to play a nasty political game.

We can bring this to a resolution today. Using the drawn-out and convoluted reconciliation process is far too risky—far too risky. Too many American families are at stake. Far better for us to solve this problem right here and right now.

Mr. President, as if in legislative session, I ask unanimous consent that, at a time to be determined by the majority leader following consultation with the Republican leader, the Senate proceed to the consideration of S. 2868, a bill to suspend the debt limit, which was introduced earlier today; that there be 2 hours for debate equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees; that upon the use or yielding back of time, the bill be considered read a third time and the Senate vote on the passage of the bill with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. McCONNELL. Reserving the right to object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Republican leader.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, my colleague wants to discuss precedence

from a decade ago, but he and his colleagues have spent all year boasting that what Democrats are doing to the country and the economy is completely without precedent. I agree. What they are trying to do is completely without precedent. There is nothing normal—nothing normal—about Democrats using reconciliation multiple times to blow a \$5.5 trillion hole in the deficit without a single vote from our side. Debt limit increases like the one we saw in 2006 were not—I repeat, not—precursors to a massive blowout reconciliation package that Republicans were just waiting to shove down Democrats’ throats.

My colleague is trying hard to make this complicated. It is actually simple. I have said for more than 2 months that we will not help this unified Democratic government raise the debt ceiling. Democrats will not get bipartisan help borrowing money so they can immediately blow historic sums on a partisan taxing-and-spending spree.

The Democratic leader knew this request would fail. There is no chance—no chance—the Republican conference will go out of our way to help Democrats conserve their time and energy so they can resume ramming through partisan socialism as fast as possible. This Democratic government has spent months boasting about the radical transformation they are ramming through. They are proud of it. They have no standing whatsoever to ask 50 Republican Senators to make the process more convenient.

When the Democratic leader was recently in the minority, he made us file cloture on matters that weren’t one-tenth this controversial. We had to invoke cloture on nominees who went on to be confirmed with literally zero votes in opposition. But now the Democratic leader wants us to skip that step on something this controversial? Of course, that is not going to happen.

All year long, Democrats have wanted to control government spending all on their own. They wanted to be in the position they are in right now. They requested from the Parliamentarian and won extra flexibility to redo reconciliation. So, if Democrats want to use fast-tracked, party-line processes to spend trillions of dollars and transform the country, they will have to use the same tool to raise the debt ceiling.

Now, here is what Republicans will do: For the sake of the full faith and credit of our country, I am about to propose a different consent, one that will allow Democrats to start the budget process they will need to use to raise the debt ceiling. Our Democratic colleagues will need to do this alone, but I will propose an agreement to ensure the process can begin as soon as Democrats accept that this is the path they need to take.

Therefore, Mr. President, I ask the Senate to modify the request that has been made by the majority leader so that, in lieu of this proposal, if the Budget Committee reports out a 304

budget resolution with instructions to raise the debt limit or is discharged from consideration of such resolution, the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Does the majority leader so modify his request?

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, the Republican leader has offered virtually nothing. He keeps the same risky process in place. He is totally doing a 180-degree turn from what he has offered time and again. The Democrats vote yes without any Republican help, but he refuses to do that. He refuses to do that. Our proposal is fair. Our proposal is not risky, the way the Republican leader’s is, and his doesn’t change a darned thing.

Therefore, I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection to the original request?

Mr. McCONNELL. I object.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection is heard.

The Senator from Washington.

DEBT CEILING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, Senate Democrats just gave Republicans yet another opportunity to do the right thing—to make sure the U.S. Government pays its bills, like every working family in our country does.

Now, Senate Republicans have acknowledged that, even though default would be catastrophic for our economy, they would not vote to prevent it—no Republican votes or help to prevent an economic catastrophe. Now they have kicked their brinkmanship up another notch by blocking Democrats—Democrats only—from voting to avoid default with a purely Democratic vote.

This makes no sense if you truly care about our workers, about our families, about our hard-won economic recovery. It only makes sense if their goal is economic sabotage—if they are so willing to put politics first that you put the American economy on the line. That is, apparently, what the Republican Party stands for today until proven otherwise: economic sabotage and politics first, no matter who gets hurt.

This is a disgrace. It is an embarrassment. But it is not going to stop Democrats from fighting to protect our economy from the devastating consequences of default, because let me be clear: Republicans may think this is some obscure fight right now, but it will not be if it hits Americans’ bank accounts, and they are fooling themselves if they think people won’t know who is responsible.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, suspending the debt ceiling is not about generating new spending. It is about making sure the government can pay for our spending. Since 1960, Congress has done this. It has raised the debt ceiling approximately 80 times. It is not unusual; it is not uncommon; it is not unacceptable. What is unacceptable is that our colleagues won’t even allow us to do it.

The 50 of us are united in this, and I say: Where are our Republican colleagues?

They know the fact: A default will impact everyone. The government will need to decide between sending out Social Security checks, ensuring we keep our promises to our vets, and paychecks to active military. It is disastrous for our economy and small business.

This year, Neil Bradley of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce said that failing to act responsibly and provide an increase in the debt limit would endanger our economy. It would cause global markets, of course, to lose confidence in the full faith and credit of the United States.

The stakes are high. This should not be about scoring political points. Our families, our workers, our seniors deserve better. Democrats are united to stand by their side.

And we say to our Republican colleagues: Where are you?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, Rube Goldberg was an American sculptor, cartoonist, and inventor best known for his cartoons that created very complicated machines to do very simple tasks.

Today, we have heard from MITCH MCCONNELL that he wants to emulate Rube Goldberg and put our entire national economy at risk by an extraordinarily complicated method to do a simple task, and the simple task was laid out so clearly in 2006. The minority leader said we are in exactly the same position now as we were then. Well, yes. The Republicans asked the Democrats to not filibuster so that they could raise the debt limit. The tables are turned. The simple same courtesy takes away the risk to our economy.

The risk is great for disaster relief, for Medicaid, for payments to our veterans, for payments to our currently serving forces; and there are broader risks, risks that Mark Zandi has laid out, in saying a recession could result in the loss of millions of jobs, that it could result in the loss of a half a billion dollars in family wealth, that it could be—or \$15 trillion in household wealth—\$15 trillion.

There are moments when the political games have to stop, when the partisan warfare has to stop. The Democrats did what the Republicans suggested in 2006. We also took an alternative method that MITCH MCCONNELL suggested in the past, which was to let, in 2011, the President raise the debt ceiling subject to an override by Congress. We have twice worked with the Republicans, at their request, for a simple method. This is not the moment for a Rube Goldberg disaster with the wealth and health of Americans at risk.

I thank the Presiding Officer.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Maine.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that, following my remarks, Senator LANKFORD and Senator SCOTT of South Carolina be recognized to speak and to complete their remarks prior to the vote.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, the debate on President Biden's massive plan to expand social programs has focused primarily on its enormous cost. Remarkably, little attention has been paid to the content of those policy changes. Yet the expensive entitlement programs the administration is proposing would have profound implications for people's lives and for the values that are among the pillars of our society, for they would break the connection between work and a brighter future.

From antiquity to our time, great thinkers have observed that work is about more than just putting food on the table, important though that is; it has a profound value that enables people to build lives of self-reliance and meaning.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., once said:

No work is insignificant. All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity.

Under the President's plan, assistance checks sent from Washington would have no requirement that a recipient work, or pursue education or training, or participate in programs to remove barriers that prevent him or her from working. These unconditioned checks would sever the link between government assistance and work, education, or other requirements. No one would help a family identify obstacles to a better life. In essence, the Biden administration would reverse the pledge and reality of President Clinton's reforms when he promised to "end welfare as we know it."

Robert Doar, who oversaw assistance programs both for New York Governor George Pataki and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, described what has long been a bipartisan consensus. He said:

... the way to help people escape poverty is through a combination of work and government aid—not work alone and not government aid alone. But the two together.

Why is that combination so powerful and so successful?

Government assistance provides a hand up and aids families who are struggling to overcome barriers to a better life. Work not only provides the economic pathway out of poverty, but—also equally important—imparts dignity, self-reliance, and confidence. It allows people to provide for their own families. It instills a sense of belonging and pride. It strengthens our communities.

Let me give you two examples.

I first met Adais when she was enrolled in the Federal Job Corps program in Limestone, ME. As a teenager,

she had been homeless and wanted to get as far away as possible from the terrible circumstances in her life—thus her choice of the Job Corps in northern Maine. After completing this program in Limestone, Adais earned her degree in nursing from Husson University in Bangor. Today, due to her own perseverance, hard work, and government support during a very difficult time, she has a good life working as a nurse and providing for her three sons. She can take much pride in the life that she has built for herself and her family.

The second example involves women I met at the Aroostook County Community Action Program. They have benefited from a holistic approach to poverty, one that focuses on the needs of both the children and their parents—a two-generation-together approach—in order to end intergenerational poverty.

This two-generation approach identifies obstacles to work and financial independence, and then provides the necessary coaching and supports to help parents succeed in their goals while also meeting the needs of their children.

These mothers recounted to me with great pride their very moving stories of climbing the economic ladder out of poverty and into the workforce, providing a much better life for themselves and their children.

What these stories have in common is the dignity of work. As Stephen Hawking observed, "Work gives you meaning and purpose." Securing the skills and support to get good jobs changed the lives of these parents and the lives of their children.

Now, let me be clear that I have supported providing additional help to assist low-income working families. For example, I worked with Senator RUBIO to successfully double the child tax credit and expand its refundable portion as part of the 2017 tax reform act, but this credit was tied to work until the Biden administration changed the rules of the American Rescue Plan earlier this year.

Given the pandemic, that may well have been justified as a temporary measure. But now, the administration wants to jettison the work requirement permanently, and the House Democrats' bill removes all means testing for a new childcare entitlement program so even very wealthy families would qualify.

Shouldn't we look carefully at the consequences of sending checks from Washington untethered to any work or other requirements? Shouldn't assistance prioritize those with the greatest needs but in ways that position them to achieve self-reliance?

There are certainly times when it is appropriate for government to step in, and no one is arguing that people who cannot work, who may have disabilities, for example, should not receive government assistance—of course, they should. And in a time of crisis, certainly, we should do all we can to help